

September 18, 2022

**Dr Chessa Lutter**

**Re: MC Bill 18-22**

My name is Chessa Lutter and a 30-year resident of Montgomery County, MD. I am a nutritionist and epidemiologist, retired from the World Health Organization, and currently teleworking from home as a Senior Fellow at RTI International.

**Gas-powered leaf blowers (GPLBs) negatively affect human health.** According to the US CDC, they cause: hearing loss, tinnitus, cardiovascular effects, immune system suppression, stress hormone release, sleep disturbance, impaired childhood development, impaired cognition, mental health problems. These effects lead to reduced work and school productivity, and reduced quality of life. The consequences are particularly acute for children, seniors, and people with hearing disorders and neurological conditions. The more than one million workers in the landscaping industry, over half of whom are Hispanic and Latino, are at particular risk given their immediate proximity to GPLBs as they produce noise levels ranging from 102–115 decibels (“dBs”) at the ear of the operator; higher than the recommended limit of 85 dBs established by the US EPA and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.

**Banning GPLBs will improve racial equity.** The Racial Equity and Social Justice Impact Statement, states that their ban “could narrow racial and social disparities in the County as its overall benefits to Latinx employees in the local landscaping sector and to County residents exceed its costs to local landscape business owners, who are disproportionately Latinx. To the extent Latinx business owners are disproportionately harmed, the grant reimbursement program authorized under Bill 18-22 to help defray the cost of replacing gas-powered blowers for electric ones will dampen this harm”. [RESJIS Bill 18-22: Noise Control – Leaf Removal Equipment – Amendments \(montgomerycountymd.gov\)](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/RESJIS/Bill-18-22-Noise-Control-Leaf-Removal-Equipment-Amendments)

**GPLBs are damaging to the environment and contribute to regional air pollution and climate change.** They generate chemicals and particulates that can violate EPA air pollution standards and emit significant quantities of ozone-forming chemicals, carbon monoxide, and other toxic air pollutants. They generate CO<sub>2</sub> at a rate 3 to 9 times higher than electric-powered blowers, contributing to climate change.

**GPLBs low-wave noise frequencies travel long distances, penetrates walls of homes, and affect homes far distant from the source.** The noise caused by their use in densely urban neighborhoods affect a large number of homes. Nearly all of my neighbors employ lawncare companies that come on a weekly basis. Given how far their noise travels, I can hear them from up to 90 surrounding properties; many from within my home with windows closed.

**GPLBs routinely violate Montgomery County noise standards, which are virtually never enforced.** Enforcement is so poor that I have given wasting time to file complaints through the county website as they have never resulted in any change in the practices of landscapers near my home. This lack of enforcement is particularly irksome given my annual property taxes of \$7,881.

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**The use of GPLBs is unpredictable.** Landscaping crews, typically using two and up to four blowers simultaneously, work from as early as 7 am to 7 pm Monday through Sunday. I never know when the noise and gas fumes will prevent me from enjoying or working in my yard, hold a gathering of friends, or concentrate on my work and, thus, livelihood.

As a resident of Montgomery County, I insist you:

- Pass without delay MC Bill 18-22 to be effective January 1, 2023
- Mount a large-scale communications campaign in English and Spanish to inform on the new bill and that includes information on consequences of violation, and
- Enforce the bill and fine violators. Otherwise, a warning or small fine will be seen as the cost of doing business by lawncare companies.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on Bill 18-22. Once in effect, it will reduce the multiple health and environmental hazards caused by GPLBs, improve racial equity and social justice, and contribute to the quality of life of all citizens of Montgomery County.

## References

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